



Organising and
negotiating to address
workload in schools



Introduction

An unrealistic and ever increasing workload is becoming a daily reality for many school support staff employees. A recent UNISON survey of over 14,000 schools support workers found that nearly 55% face workload problems and are struggling to do their work each week. More than one in ten feel that their workload is 'impossible' and that they never manage to do all of the work expected of them.

School support staff bring a huge amount of goodwill to their work, often putting in extra hours. Working extra hours on a regular and/or long-term basis should only be done if compensatory time off is agreed or extra money paid. Working extra hours can lead to burnout and resentment and, in the long-term, needs to be addressed.

Workload has a serious impact on morale and on health too – more than 52% of school support staff told us that they have suffered from stress, anxiety or depression due to workload. There is a cost to the individual, their colleagues, and to schools in terms of sick-pay and cover arrangements. Workload problems can have a major impact on the ways in which schools provide support for pupils and on the wellbeing of their workforce. More work given to fewer people costs schools more in the long run.

Given the extent of this problem workload is a priority issue for UNISON. Not addressing workload is not an option for employers – there is a cost to morale and goodwill, health, and staff retention.

How can workload issues be addressed?

Organise your workplace

In this booklet you will find the UNISON guidance on 'Negotiating a workload agreement with the employer'. This guidance gives practical advice on how to share and raise concerns with colleagues and managers. The advice explains how you can work with your colleagues to seek an agreement with your school on how workload should be managed and what should be included in an agreement.

If you are a UNISON steward talk to your colleagues about their workload and find out if this is a widespread problem at your school. You can run a local survey or talk to your branch to ask for their help in surveying your colleagues. A model survey can be found at the back of the negotiating guidance.

Remember to talk to *all* colleagues – UNISON members include administrators, librarians, technicians, maintenance, catering, cleaning and classroom staff, and many more.

Ask your colleagues to join UNISON! You will be stronger if you are working together. If you don't have a steward at your school consider becoming one – maybe share the role with a colleague.

Health and Safety

Excessive workload is a health and safety risk. If your school has a health and safety representative ask for their help in assessing the extent of the problem and raising this problem with the school health and safety committee. A trained health and safety rep can ask the employer to carry out a stress risk assessment. If you don't have a health and safety representative at your school, contact your local branch to ask for help. You can call UNISON Direct on 0800 0 857 857 to find out the contact details of your local branch.

You can become a health and safety representative. You'll receive time off for your training and it will cover all the information you need to make sure that your workplace complies with health and safety legislation. Again, you can share the role with a colleague so that there's always a union health and safety representative at work.

Gathering your Evidence

Remember to gather your information. The advice on the following pages gives lots of ideas about generating evidence to find out the scale of the workload problem. You can refer to:

- Your contract of employment. This should contain your hours of work.
- Your job description. This should make clear what work you can be asked to do (as well as what you won't be asked to do).
- Nationally agreed role profiles for schools. See skillsforschools.org.uk/library

These are used by many maintained schools as well as by academy and free schools. The role profiles are not legally binding but give an indication of the range of tasks and responsibilities your job may have. Many schools use the role profiles to determine the correct grade for the job. The national job profiles cover administration, finance, business managers, catering, exams, teaching assistants, premises staff, midday supervisors etc.

The original 2003 Role Profiles had the following duties and expectations in them:

- "Assist with the supervision of pupils out of lesson times, including before and after school and at lunchtimes." (Teaching Assistants General - Levels 1 and 2)
- "Implement planned supervision of pupils out of school hours." (Behaviour/Guidance/Support - Level 3)
- "Be responsible for the provision of out of school learning activities e.g. clubs, extra-curricular activities within guidelines established by the school." (Curriculum/Resource Support - Level 4)

In 2013 the Role Profiles were revised and working before and after school and at lunchtimes are no longer part of the nationally agreed role profiles. Of course your own contract of employment and working arrangements may include work during those hours. Your contract of employment will override the role profiles. UNISON's advice is that schools should be following the 2013 Role Profiles when recruiting new staff.

The current (2013) teaching assistant Role Profiles indicate that teaching assistants can be asked to:

- Assist with break-time supervision including facilitating games and activities (level 1)
- Assist with escorting pupils on educational visits (level 1 and 2)
- Escort and supervise pupils on educational and out of school activities (level 3)

Remember that Role Profiles do not deal directly with the volume of work that you are being asked to do – but can be helpful if you are regularly being asked to work above and beyond your job description in terms of the range of duties. You may want to review the role profiles to see if you need to apply for a re-grading. Again, take advice from your local UNISON branch on this matter.

Cover supervision advice (England and Wales)

In addition to the workload advice that follows, UNISON has produced advice on cover supervision for teaching assistants which includes the following nationally agreed advice relevant to all schools support staff:

Unpaid overtime

There is some evidence that on occasions, support staff with established contractual arrangements are being expected to undertake 'unpaid overtime'. This is unacceptable.

If it becomes clear that an individual's working arrangements do not fully take into account the work required of the post, then a proper discussion must take place between them and their line manager to resolve the issue. This might mean:

- *paying overtime;*
- *extending, by agreement, the hours required under the contract, with the appropriate increase in salary; or*
- *allocating the additional work to other members of staff.*

You can find a full copy of this advice by following this link (unison.org.uk search for 'rarely cover'). This advice is due to be updated soon.

UNISON training

Nothing will change if you don't ask for it. The dialogue can start by making your manager aware of the stresses and

strains that you are under and asking them to help you with your workload. UNISON knows that this can be a difficult conversation to have so we are able to offer you and your colleagues training on Communicating with Confidence and how to get the most out of your development review or your one-to-one meeting with your manager. Ask your branch education officer to help you get these courses up and running. Your branch can help by liaising with your UNISON Regional Education Officer to set the courses up. Courses can be run, by arrangement and agreement during an INSET day, or over an extended lunch-hour.

The Workload Challenge (England)

The Department for Education (DfE) in England introduced a Teacher Workload Challenge in February 2015, following on from a survey aimed at teaching staff.

From the very start of this government initiative UNISON complained about the focus on teachers and headteachers, with little mention of other school staff. After a series of meetings between UNISON and DfE officials, the government issued a report in December 2105: Workload challenge: analysis of teacher consultation responses - support staff (gov.uk search for 'workload challenge').

At the start of 2106, the government set up three teacher workload review groups to look at marking, planning and data management. UNISON called for support staff representatives on these groups, but again the DfE chose to focus only on teachers. In March 2016 the government published reports from these groups. Links to all the reports and correspondence between the Secretary of State and the chairs of the groups are available online. (gov.uk search 'workload review groups and Nicky Morgan').

UNISON has again raised concerns with officials as the reports make no mention of support staff. Whilst there is a small set of recommendations in the Data Management Group report, which is aimed at 'everybody' there is no reference to support staff elsewhere. For example, there is no mention of how classroom based support staff fit into planning.

The DfE is expecting schools to use the reports to 'reassess and streamline their practice and systems and review them on an ongoing basis'. Therefore, branches and representatives should be prepared to engage with schools if they try to change working practices. In particular we have concerns that new working practices focussed on relieving the workload of teachers and headteachers could lead to more work for support staff.

If your school does want to talk to you about making changes in light of the Workload Challenge we hope this advice will give you and your colleagues ideas about how to approach, defend and improve working conditions.

If you can take the initiative and raise the problem with your employer then we hope you find this guidance will be useful and that it helps you to get the problem of workload out into the open. Don't suffer alone – talk to your colleagues, talk to your branch and organise together to make a difference.

Tackling workload challenges in Scotland

The introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland has increased workload pressure on all staff in Scottish schools. As in England, the Scottish Government has focussed on the pressure on teachers, but UNISON Scotland continues to demand action about the pressures on school support staff too. We have worked with Education Scotland to provide conferences for support staff to give advice and training about managing behaviour challenges and to increase members' confidence about their essential contribution to the learning environment in Scottish schools.

There are no nationally agreed role profiles for school support staff in Scotland so those sections in this guide are not applicable, but all the other suggestions in this guide for action on workload concerns do apply. Organising members, raising awareness of your rights and acting together to tackle problems are the basic tools which help us tackle workplace problems, no matter where that workplace is located.

UNISON Scotland's Education Issues Group (EIG) meets regularly to discuss issues of concern for early years and school staff in Scotland. Each Scottish local authority branch is entitled to send a delegate to EIG meetings; these delegates are a good source of advice and support for dealing with workload issues in schools. Please contact your branch to find out who your branch EIG contact is.

Tackling workload challenges in Wales

In Wales, most official commentary on workload in schools has traditionally focussed heavily on teaching staff, thus worsening the sense that any improvements in one section of the classroom automatically means more work for others. However, the longer term curriculum reform agenda (Curriculum for Wales – A Curriculum for Life) affords the Welsh Government and employers a fresh opportunity to address workload issues across the whole school workforce. Initially, the examination of workload falls under the remit of New Deal Pioneer Schools, tasked to look at the professional learning and development needs of the schools workforce. The results of this survey serves as a reminder to Pioneer Schools that in order to create a strong foundation for an exciting new curriculum in Wales, there must be a genuine attempt to address the workload concerns of support staff as well as teachers.

Some positive work is already taking place in partnership between education unions and Welsh Government to seek to reduce the level of bureaucracy in the education system. Feedback on this piece of work is expected in Autumn 2016. If successful this project should yield some positive implications for workload across the school team.

Tackling Workload challenges in Northern Ireland.

Education in Northern Ireland is a devolved function within the jurisdiction of the devolved government. The Departmental education budget has come under severe pressure due to the diminishing block grant from Westminster. Following the NI Assembly elections in May 2016 and the appointment of a new Minister, a deficit of over £70m is anticipated.

This will renew momentum in schools to cut their budgets and as before the pressure will come on school support staff, creating redundancies and increasing workload on school support staff.

Support staff hold distinct NI evaluated and agreed job descriptions which are categorised as follows: schools maintenance staff; general assistants; and special needs assistants which have three pay bands within this job category.

UNISON NI will challenge the threat of privatisation and increased workload with a targeted recruitment and union building campaigns.

Wherever you work the guide on the following pages should help you to take up and tackle workload issues alongside your colleagues.

Please share your campaigns and your successes with us by contacting education@unison.co.uk. If you need extra help and support contact your branch and consider becoming more active – UNISON relies on local workplace volunteers – the more who volunteer the more we can achieve. We will provide the training and resources to help you at every stage.



Negotiating an agreement with the employer

Introduction

This guidance sets out the key issues for branches when negotiating on workload with your employer. This advice outlines some techniques to monitor overtime and unpaid hours as well as providing ideas on how to engage with your employer so that managers are able to properly support employees who have workload issues.

"I have more work than I could do in a lifetime."

Background

Since 2008 government spending cuts have led to over half a million job losses across the entire public sector. UNISON's 2016 schools survey found that 25% of our members have told us that their school either has or is planning to make redundancies. 26% told us that vacant posts are not being filled. As a result of funding cuts and job losses there is a higher prevalence of job insecurity amongst the workforce along with an increase in workload. Many schools members are telling us that they now have a smaller workforce to do the same or more work.

It is well documented that work intensification has a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of staff. UNISON surveys across our service groups have consistently highlighted that excessive workloads have resulted in a workforce with high levels of stress, increase in sickness absence rates, poor morale amongst the workforce, and damages the work/life balance of staff and increases in staff turnover. This affects all public sector colleagues

- A 2015 UNISON survey of Ambulance staff highlighted that over two-thirds of respondents had experienced an increase in their workload and staff shortages during the year. The survey shows that as a result, an increasing number of staff are thinking about leaving the ambulance service and staff are taking sickness absence due to stress.
- A 2015 UNISON survey of Police staff reported similar findings with two-thirds of respondents reporting an increase in their workload due to job cuts, with increased levels of workplace stress taking their toll on the health and wellbeing of police staff.
- A 2015 UNISON survey of School Business managers found that over 87% usually work more than their contracted hours with nearly one in four doing more than ten extra hours per week.
- In a survey of over 15,000 school support staff in 2014, UNISON found that over 40% of staff work more than two additional hours per week with more than 10% working more than 7 extra hours per week (the same as working an extra day per week). Nearly 80% of these staff said it was because their workload demands it.
- Examples of workload agreements have appeared in the education sector where staff are facing increases in student contact time, and growing class sizes. For example, the Scottish negotiating committee for teachers recognises that teacher workload is an issue which must be managed through local workload agreements and has drawn up local workload best practice agreements with separate councils.
- A national agreement 'Raising standards and tackling workload' was established in 2003 for school staff in England to support reform in the sector; the agreement explicitly covered support staff roles. The principles in the agreement recognise the contribution support staff make in raising school standards and states that all staff have a right to a reasonable work/life balance. The agreement puts in place a time-line with actions to reduce staff working excessive hours.
- In the social care sector UNISON Scotland have done a lot of work around establishing a local workload manifesto in social care. Their guidance includes some working out of time allocations that some members may find useful in social care and education sectors.

"My concern is very simply that the amount of work grows each term and is now at a point where there is a continual backlog...My "core" responsibilities are being squeezed out of the working day."

UNISON branches and representatives can play a critical role in the workplace by establishing local agreements or joint work with employers which protects employees against excessive workloads. This can support workplace health and safety by regulating excessive working hours. Part of any agreement should establish a framework whereby employers support employees and give practical guidance on reducing excessive workloads.

One university worked with joint staff-side unions and agreed a local workload policy. The central purpose of is to ‘maintain and enhance the quality of work delivered at the University by its staff’.

The policy covers some key principles which are the bedrock of any workload policy. It states that staff have the right to reasonable workloads, a fair distribution of work, the right to socially acceptable working hours, entitled to regular daily, weekly and annual breaks from work, and that staff are able to challenge excessive workloads through the agreement.

Within the policy there are procedures to review the overall allocation of work of staff.

Getting started

If your school already has UNISON representatives they can consider the ideas in this guidance and make a plan of action about how tackle the problem. School based representatives can get extra support and advice from the local UNISON branch with the campaign and negotiations. If your school doesn't have a UNISON representative you can ask your branch to come and help you raise these issues with your employer. Members should consider who should be their union representatives so that they can work together within the school and make sure that this issue remains on the agenda. Remember, UNISON provides free training for representatives and you should be entitled to paid time off to attend training – your branch can help you arrange this. Your branch may also be able to help you work with other local schools so that you can launch your campaign together and support each other.

Establishing an agreement or policy

UNISON representatives should discuss establishing a workload agreement or policy locally with schools management and publicise this to members. This may take the form of a written agreement, a policy, or a joint working group on workload. It may form part of project that unions and the employer work on together as part of a health and safety committee or staffing committee. Many schools will already recognise the health and safety implications posed by staff working excessive hours with unmanageable workloads and will want to discuss with unions how to alleviate stress on staff by managing workloads.

Why should we address workload issues?

You can consider the reasons below and use them as a basis to open discussions with your employer. Reasons to establish a local workload agreement or policy include:

Health and Safety

Having a manageable workload is part of safe working practice – every school will have a nominated manager/s responsible for health and safety. Your school may also have a health and safety committee. If your school has a UNISON safety representative then they can play an active role discussing workload and raising this with management. If there isn't a school-based health and safety representative then contact your local UNISON branch to ask for their help.

You can cite Regulation 3 and 4 of The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which requires employers to risk assess any hazards posed to staff and that it is the responsibility of the employer to put measures in place to eliminate any risks to staff and their health. You can raise with the employer their responsibility to ensure safe working practices under The Working Time Regulations 1998.

Full details on how to use Health and Safety regulations if excessive workload is causing stress, can be found in ‘Stress at Work: A Guide for UNISON Safety Reps’ (unison.org.uk search ‘stress at work’). This advice includes information about carrying out risk assessments and the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) stress management standards.

Improved morale and retention

Benefits to tackling workload problems include improved health and more congenial working conditions for all staff, a reduction in sickness absence rates and improved staff morale and retention of staff. Better morale leads to greater productivity – so everyone wins! UNISON representatives could also work with HR to identify levels of staff turnover and explore the reasons why staff are leaving the organisation – this could be down to work related stress, staff shortages and workload issues. Recruiting and training new staff is an additional cost to the school that may be reduced if workload is addressed.

“My workload is ever increasing in both volume and senior duties.”

Start your campaign

1. Gather your evidence

UNISON's schools survey 2016 found out how serious the workload problem is in schools. At the end of this guidance (appendix two) you will find the report on this survey giving you lots of evidence about the national extent of the problem.

You should also check:

- contracts of employment to see how many hours you are contracted to work
- job descriptions to see what work you are expected to do
- role profiles (skillsforschools.org.uk/library)

2. Work collectively and identify your allies

If possible UNISON members should work collectively with other unions to promote the benefits of having a workload agreement in place and demonstrate how the policy can be used to raise standards. Talk to the teaching union/s in your school and see if you can run a joint campaign. It is important to ensure that you cover all employees in the school.

Get support and advice from your local UNISON branch – if you don't have a contact for them call UNISON Direct on 0800 0 857 857. You may want to run your campaign jointly with other, neighbouring schools. Your branch can help you coordinate, share plans and resources.

3. Find out what your members think

You will need to find out how serious the problem is in your own school. If you and your colleagues have identified workloads as an issue in your organisation you should run a workload/stress survey and present the findings to management as a means of evidencing excessive workloads within the organisation. Make clear that any responses from the survey will be confidential and individuals will not be identifiable. A model survey on workload is provided (appendix one) which you can adapt with any other questions that you think would help you to build a good case.

Ask members and non-members for their views. You can use this survey to ask non-members to join the union which will make your campaign stronger. Your branch should be able to help you if you need to send the survey out by email or post, but remember it's also good to talk to your colleagues about what you're doing so they can get more involved.

4. Changing the workplace culture

Union representatives should emphasize that a workload policy or clear commitment from the employer can help staff to speak out about excessive workloads and unsafe working conditions. It's better for employees to feel comfortable raising their concerns instead of remaining

silent and isolated in the workplace trying to complete a job which is impossible. Encourage your school to tackle the problem before it escalates to crisis proportions if at all possible.

Present your data to the employer and work with them to agree the best way to take this forward and address the problem for everyone.

5. Publicise your workload agreement

If the union and employer are able to negotiate a workload agreement or policy you need to let your members know about it. You can suggest to the employer that a joint message be sent out to all staff about the new policy and it could be introduced on a staff training day. UNISON representatives can arrange a meeting at the school to let members know. Make sure that your UNISON branch has a copy of the agreement and send a copy to education@unison.co.uk. If you are able to negotiate an agreement this can help other schools locally to negotiate one in their school too.

If all else fails...

If your employer is still unwilling to tackle workload, there may be other ways to incorporate the key principles of a workload agreement into other organisational policies including work/life balance policies or working time policies.

Below is an example from a college where joint staff-side unions negotiated a policy which covered hours of work and overtime:

The working hours policy at the college sets out how working time and the wellbeing of staff is 'paramount' and the expectation that staff should not consistently work in excess of their hours. Where it is identified an individual staff member is consistently working too many hours they should meet with their line-manager and examine why this is happening.

The agreement sets out HR's duty to collect data on staffing levels and review working patterns, methods, efficiency and training for staff.

The final part of the agreement gives an explanation (by grade) of what hours staff should be expected to work and what remuneration staff will earn for working agreed overtime.

What should be included in a workload agreement or policy?

The agreement should apply to all staff and include the following key principles:

1. Regulate excessive working hours

As there is already legislation covering excessive working hours, the agreement should recognise that the Working Time Directive sets out minimum standards of employment in relation to monitoring working time and promotes staff having a healthy work/life balance. There should be references to contracted working hours ensuring that employees are not regularly expected to work beyond those hours and detailing arrangement for compensation and/or time off in lieu if extra hours are worked.

2. Regulate excessive workloads

The agreement should make sure that staff have the right to reasonable workloads and a fair distribution of work. This should detail the responsibility that managers have to ensure that workloads are realistic and achievable. The agreement should take account of planning, preparation and marking time for those who take work home and/or work outside normal school hours.

3. Management training and supporting staff

The agreement should set out how managers should manage workloads in a fair and transparent manner. Managers should be offered training on supporting employees with their workloads and use the appraisal system as a tool to discuss and identify workload issues. Managers should be given advice and training on how to appropriately manage staff absence.

4. Mechanism to discuss workload

The policy needs to have a mechanism for employees to discuss unfair or unreasonable workloads. Where workloads are disputed staff should be invited to attend a meeting with their manager and are entitled to be accompanied by their trade union representative.

5. What next...

If an employee disputes their workload and, following the meeting, the employer takes no action to resolve the situation, then the employee should then use the school's grievance procedure to pursue an outcome. Make sure the member gets advice from the union before lodging a grievance. If the situation affects a group of staff a collective grievance could be lodged but advice from union must be sought first.

Monitoring overtime / unpaid hours jointly with the employer:

There are various ways of monitoring overtime and unpaid hours – below are a few examples :

1. Keep a diary

If a workload issue has been identified ask colleagues to keep a record of the hours they have worked on a time-sheet. Staff could keep a log of their hours in a diary or on a printed spreadsheet.

If keeping a paper time sheet is time consuming many members will have access to electronic devices that could be used to log their hours like a mobile phone or tablet. An electronic spreadsheet can be set up to automatically work out working time. Some staff may have their own on-line calendars where they can log their hours as a record. If employers are unhappy about this monitoring, restrict this exercise to UNISON members only as part of a local campaign on workloads.

2. Monitor hours over a set amount of time

Working hours should be monitored across a four week period in order to get a clear picture of the

hours staff are working in different areas of the organisation.

3. What you can do with the data: analyse and publicise

Once the data has been submitted, work out how many extra hours a month staff are working and how much the individual members are losing in unpaid hours – staff should be aware of how much money they are losing out on and how many extra unpaid hours the organisation is gaining a month through the goodwill of their workforce.

Publicise the findings to your members – you could send them an email, write a short leaflet and call them together for a quick lunchtime meeting to discuss the results.

4. Are there areas for concern?

Staff working excessive hours is an indication of workload issues within the organisation. This data will tell the union and the employer the scale of the problem and if there are any particular 'hot spots' within the organisation which are overstretched. Branches should use these monitoring sheets as a campaign tool to negotiate a workload agreement with the employer and flag any concerns to address the workload problem and raise health and safety concerns.

Training managers to support employees and help them to manage their workload

Though any locally negotiated workload agreement may set out agreed key principles, it is important that managers are trained to understand the agreement in order for them to support staff with workload issues.

If staff are raising problem with workloads, working excessive hours and there are incidents of staff absences due to work related stress, these are all very serious health and safety concerns and should be a warning sign for managers to take action. Managers need to be given the training and authority to effectively address workload problems experienced by their staff. They need to be able to remove or reallocate duties if an employee has too much work. Managers need to be made aware that not addressing workload can have a serious impact on their team or department.

As well as training managers to understand the workload agreement, managers should be trained in delivering effective one-to-one support and appraisal meetings where workload issues can be identified.

Using workplace appraisals and development review meetings to raise workplace issues

Workplace appraisals and development reviews give managers an opportunity to discuss with staff their work plans for the year and any workload issues that arise from this or that have already arisen. Managers should not use this as an opportunity to place staff on capability procedures just because staff have been brave enough to raise issues around excessive work. A locally negotiated workload agreement will help protect against this and it may go some way to change the organisational culture of raising concerns.

Encourage your members to speak to their manager about the problem before it gets too serious. Ask the member to think about their job and list their main duties and to prioritise them before the meeting. They can then discuss the list with their manager and seek agreement about what they *must* do and what might not get done if there is too much work. Make sure that members have support by discussing the problem with them and accompanying them to the meeting if they are allowed to take representative with them. Follow up the meeting in writing with an email thanking the manager for the meeting and confirming the actions that were agreed.

Recruitment and organising - using workload issues to organise your members

- Excessive workloads are an important campaigning issue for the branch to organise around and in the process recruit new members. A campaign should encourage members and non-members to speak out about this issue and not feel isolated.
- The campaign should aim to raise awareness of workload issues within the workplace and publicise the branch's efforts to work with management to establish a workload agreement.
- The campaign should promote the message that having a healthy work / life balance is good for staff and good for the employer!
- Branches should hold workplace meetings where they can speak directly with members about their workload issues and discuss possible solutions to put to management.
- Branches can raise awareness by emailing all members and promoting the campaign. As part of the campaign the branch should circulate a confidential on-line workload survey or paper questionnaire. The findings of this survey can then be reported back to members. The results obtained from the survey can be used to put forward a case to management the need for a workload agreement.
- Establishing a workload agreement would be a good win to promote UNISON within the workplace. It may also help encourage and promote positive collaborative working with other trade union colleagues in the organisation.
- UNISON can provide learning opportunities to boost confidence, improve your communication skills and help you get the most from your appraisal or review meetings. You can use these training events to organise and recruit new members. Liaise with your branch who will contact your UNISON regional organiser or education officer to get this put on.

Tips from UNISON activists

The following ideas were suggested by UNISON activists who have tried these in their workplaces:

- When you email your manager requesting a workload meeting you should copy in HR and your UNISON representative or branch.
- Prioritise your workload and discuss with your manager. Agree what is most important and least important and what might not get done if you have too much to do.
- Ask your manager what *they* think you shouldn't do!
- Make sure you let your school know if you think an accident may happen due to excessive workload. Schools need to be safe places for all – pupils, teachers, support staff, parents and all visitors.
- Always follow up your meeting by putting it in writing.
- Celebrate the hard work that support staff do in schools by organising a Stars in Our Schools event in November. Look out on the UNISON website for more information.

Be creative...

- One schools technician said that she sets an alarm clock to ring at 4pm (when she is due to go home). She said "I don't down tools and walk out, but I don't start any new work. My colleagues know now not to give me more work after that time."

If you have any more tips or advice that has worked in your workplace email education@unison.co.uk.



Further Information

Workload challenge 2016

Analysis of teacher consultation responses - support staff
(gov.uk search for 'workload challenge')

Stress in the Workplace

'Stress at Work: A Guide for UNISON Safety Reps'
(unison.org.uk search 'stress at work')

Working time regulations negotiators guidance

Hours and Leave (unison.org.uk search 'Hours and Leave').
This includes information about Working Time Regulations

Health and Safety

Health and Safety: A guide for UNISON safety reps (unison.org.uk search 'Health and Safety a guide')

Cover Arrangements

Branch advice on 'rarely cover' arrangements for teachers and implications for support staff (unison.org.uk search for 'rarely cover').

NJC Role profiles

Find the NJC role profiles for all schools jobs
(skillsforschools.org.uk/library_1)

Model Workload Survey – appendix one

1. How manageable is your workload?

I have some spare capacity to pick up extra work

☐

About right: I can do all or most of my work each week

☐

I struggle each week to do all of my work

☐

Impossible - I never manage to do everything asked of me

☐

2. In the past year, have you ever come to work early or stayed late, outside your normal working hours, in order to keep up with your workload?

☐ Yes, rarely

☐ Yes, monthly

☐ Yes, weekly

☐ No

3. In a typical week, how many hours in addition to your normal contracted hours, do you work as:

(Please write in the number of hours in the relevant box)

a) paid overtime (either paid or taken later as 'time off in lieu' - TOIL)

b) unpaid overtime (no pay and no TOIL)?

c) I don't work overtime

4. Does your workload negatively affect your personal life, family and/or other responsibilities? If so, how? Please describe

5. Do you feel able to report your workload concerns to your manager?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Do you believe that your workload is damaging your health (e.g. causing stress or depression)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Are you (or have you) considering leaving your job due to workload?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Are you consulted about proposed changes that affect how you work?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. Would you like to join our campaign to tackle workload?

☐ Yes

Please write your name and email address here

☐ No

Appendix two

Workload and Stress in Schools – UNISON Survey Report 2016

UNISON is the largest union in schools, representing over 250,000 members in support staff roles across the UK and 150,000 of these are teaching assistants.

Our members work in a variety of roles, including teaching and classroom assistants, school business managers, catering and cleaning staff, IT, HR and finance staff, administrators, librarians, technicians, caretakers, facilities and maintenance staff. UNISON represents staff across all types of schools and special units, including academies in England.

UNISON carried out a survey in March and April 2016 of school support staff, receiving responses from more than 14,000 (14,514) schools staff across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. In terms of responses, teaching assistants were the majority (8,211) and responses were also received from nursery nurses, school business managers, technicians, librarians, administrators, secretaries, finance workers, caretakers, catering staff and cleaners. The largest group were full-time (5,155), then part-time (4,404) or term-time only (4,216) and the majority were aged between 46 to 55.

The survey results show the devastating impact that funding cuts, and the related increase in workload, are having on the health and morale of the school support staff workforce. UNISON believes that a health and wellbeing crisis is now engulfing our schools which will result in a mass exodus of hardworking, dedicated staff unless urgent action is taken by the government.

Workload and stress – a crisis in our schools

High workplace stress levels are known to lead to reduced productivity, higher sickness absence rates, lower engagement and a drop in morale. If high stress levels are not addressed then this can lead to mental illness, including anxiety and depression.

At a time when schools are facing real-term funding cuts and are under increasing pressure and scrutiny to deliver higher grades and better OFSTED reports, it is vital that the school support staff are well motivated and well trained to help deliver the best possible educational experience.

If stress is not addressed schools will face increasing sick-pay bills to cover staff absence and staffing continuity will be disrupted, impacting negatively on children's education.

Workload is a major concern. More than half of staff (54.9% or 6,442) say they're either struggling each week (41.5% or 4,869) to do all their work or are finding it impossible to

manage everything that's asked of them (13.4% or 1,573).

Worryingly, over half of school support staff (52% or 6,172) report experiencing stress, anxiety or depression due to their workload and it seems that school employers are failing to act. Two in five (40% or 4,604) feel unable to report workload concerns to their managers. Of those who have reported their worries (43% or 4,970), more than half (56% or 2,971) say managers have not addressed their concerns.

UNISON's schools support staff survey found that 47% (5,356) of school support staff across the UK are considering leaving their job. Of these, the main reasons for this are low pay (cited by 51.5% of respondents); stress at work (cited by 49% of respondents) and workload (cited by 37% of respondents).

A recent survey (<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/22/teachers-plan-leave-five-years-survey-workload-england>) found 43% of England's teachers plan to leave in the next five years.

Whilst 41 councils have now signed up to the Time To Change pledge to take action on mental health, the reality is that the pressure schools are under has a direct effect on staff well-being and mental health. Many schools are outside local authority control, but it appears even those schools under the auspices of local government are failing to take action to reduce the stress experienced by school support staff.

A separate UNISON survey of 435 teaching assistants has shown that, on average, TAs are working 3.7 hours of unpaid overtime per week and clerical/administrative staff are working an average of 2.5 hours of unpaid overtime.

School support staff explain: support staff survey responses

"Staff cuts are at a dangerous level. People are off sick due to stress because there aren't enough staff. Teaching assistants are taking on teaching roles on a regular basis."

"Classrooms are strained; every single TA is doing far more than they are paid for. They are covering classes constantly with no support - it is making people depressed."

"Teaching assistants have greatly increased workload involving more work outside paid hours. More teaching/ planning is being taken on by TAs, covering more staff absence due to teachers' increased workload. All staff are covering for cleaning staff when they are absent as the cost

of supply cleaners is too high."

"My workload is highly pressurised, with more and more tasks to complete. The job isn't a pleasure or a vocation anymore - it's a means to an end. I don't feel the children benefit from my expertise as it is full-on, I am constantly rushing my teaching as the schedule is so tight, so much to fit in."

"The part-time technician retired and has not been replaced. The two remaining technicians therefore have an increased workload. Science teaching posts have not been filled, resulting in a succession of cover teachers which has added to our workload."

UNISON is calling for:

- The government to establish a national workload initiative with the support of staff unions and employers to urgently produce recommendations for schools on reducing workload pressures on support staff. The DfE established a national initiative for teachers, "the workload challenge", but did not include support staff in the full scope of this initiative
- OFSTED to make staff health and well-being a mandatory part of its reporting process on schools – ie the introduction of a new category within the OFSTED common inspection framework
- The DfE to require all schools to conduct stress risk assessments and produce an action plan for dealing with workplace stress
- The government to commission an independent impact assessment on the impact of its school-funding changes on pupil attainment and the health and well-being of staff

In Wales, UNISON is calling for:

- Welsh Government to work closely with recognised support staff unions to ensure that the workload issues of TAs outlined in this survey and other support staff are urgently addressed in tandem with the wider Curriculum reform (Curriculum for Wales) policy programme
- The Curriculum for Wales New Deal Pioneer Schools who are tasked with responsibility for reporting on workload to fully consider, and report on, workload implications for support staff as well as teachers

- Estyn to make staff health and well-being a mandatory part of its reporting process on schools
- The Welsh Government to require all schools to conduct stress risk assessments and produce action plan for dealing with workplace stress

